Rules. Further, Ministry of Science & Technology and the Indian Council of Medical Research have also not received any request for support of the research project.

Effect of Insecticides on Vultures

*258. PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:
SHRI RAGHAVJI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that due to increased use of insecticides, the number of vultures feasting on dead bodies of animals, particularly buffaloes, has decreased considerably all over the country;

(b) whether this fact has been confirmed by Dr. Anand R. Rehmani, President of the Faculty for Natural History;

(c) whether this fact was confirmed earlier also, by the Indian Council for Medical Research; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps proposed to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Dr. Asad R. Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society authored a report about the decline in the population of vultures due to increased use of insecticides/pesticides.

(c) and (d) The Indian Council for Medical Research has informed that they can not comment regarding decrease in the number of vultures feasting on buffaloes since their organisation covers the area of research on effects of pesticides on human beings.

The Bombay Natural History Society's report states that high levels of chemicals and pesticides are affecting the vulture populations throughout the country. Food shortage caused due to efficient utilisation of carcasses could be also one of the reasons for their decline. Presence of any avian disease is also not ruled out.

Lifting price control on Drug Industry

*259. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the domestic and multi-national pharma companies have demanded lifting of price control on the drug industry; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA): (a) and (b) The Pharmaceutical companies in the country — domestic and foreign, have been urging for relaxation of price controls on the drug industry. As announced by the Finance Minister in his speech of 27.2.1999 while presenting the Central Government's budget for 1999-2000, two high level Committees will be constituted inter alia to review the present drug policy so as to reduce the rigours of price control where they have become counter productive.

Pending cases in Environmental Courts

*260. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 480, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 26th February, 1999, and state the total number of cases pending, as on 31st December, 1998, State-wise, in Environmental Courts/Tribunals and the steps taken proposed to be taken to expedite speedy disposal of the same?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): The National Environment Appellate Authority was constituted under the National Environment Apellate Authority Act, 1997. There was no case pending with